

DISHWASHER

Field of the Invention

5 The present invention relates to a slide opening type dishwasher capable of retracting a washer tub into a main body of the dishwasher without being hindered by a lid for closing an open top of the washer tub and hiding a gap to be opened between the washer tub and the main body when the
10 washer tub is fully extracted.

Background of the Invention

 Referring to Fig. 16, there is shown one of prior art
15 slide opening type(or a drawer type, top loading) dishwashers disclosed in Japanese Patent No. 3129318. As shown, the slide opening type dishwasher includes washer tub 14 having an open top and cabinet 15 having an open front. Washer tub 14 is coupled with cabinet 15 in such a manner
20 that it can be slidably moved into and out of cabinet 15 through the open front of cabinet 15. Such sliding movement of washer tub 14 is achieved by a slide assembly. The slide assembly has a pair of first slide rails 16(only one shown) secured on both inner side surfaces of cabinet 15 and a pair
25 of second slide rails 17(only one shown) fixed on both outer side surfaces of washer tub 14. Between first and second

slide rails 16 and 17 are provided rotating bodies, e.g., ball bearings. This allows second slide rails 17 fixed at washer tub 14 to slidably move along first slide rails 16, enabling washer tub 14 to be smoothly extracted from and retracted into cabinet 15.

The slide opening type dishwasher further includes lid or inner cover 11 installed at an inner upper part of cabinet 15. Lid 11 moves down to close the open top of washer tub 14 when washer tub 14 is accommodated in cabinet 15. This prevents washing fluid spouted from wash nozzle 8 from being dispersed out of washer tub 14(see, e.g., Japanese Patent Laid-Open Publication No. 2001-275916). Lid 11 is held by cabinet 15 via a link mechanism(not shown) and is biased toward an upper front direction by a bias means(not shown). Just before washer tub 14 is completely retracted into cabinet 15, lid 11 begins to be biased against the biasing force of the bias means by an interlocking device(not shown) installed at washer tub 14 to move downwards by the link mechanism, thereby closing the open top of washer tub 14. When washer tub 14 is extracted from cabinet 15, lid 11 is released from the interlocking device thereof. Therefore, lid 11 moves along the upper front direction to open the open top of washer tub 14.

The dishwasher described above suffers from certain drawbacks. For example, even when washer tub 14 is fully extracted from cabinet 15, a rear section thereof still

remains inside cabinet 15. For this reason, it is rather difficult to charge and discharge the dishware in and from the rear section.

5 In order to solve these problems, washer tub 14 may be configured such that a top end of the rear section of washer tub 14 is located in front of the fore end of cabinet 15 when washer tub 14 is fully pulled out from cabinet 15. In this case, however, a gap will be opened between the rear end of washer tub 14 and the fore end of cabinet 15.

10 In such a construction, when washer tub 14 is extracted from cabinet 15 to a location where there will be a gap therebetween, the rear section of washer tub 14 may be lifted if a heavy load of the dishware is charged. Under the circumstances, when washer tub 14 is pushed back into
15 cabinet 15, the top end of the rear section of washer tub 14 may be interfered with lid 11 as shown in Fig. 17, hindering washer tub 14 from being smoothly restored back into cabinet 15.

20 Summary of the Invention

It is, therefore, an object of the present invention to provide a dishwasher capable of preventing an interference between a washer tub and a lid, the dishwasher
25 being provided with a covering member for hiding a gap to be opened between the washer tub and a main body of the

dishwasher when the washer tub is fully extracted from the main body.

In accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention, there is provided a dishwasher which includes a main body having generally a box shape with an open front; a washer tub being extracted from and retracted into the main body through the open front by means of slide rail assemblies, the washer tub having an open top; a lid being located at an upper part of the main body when the washer tub is fully extracted and being moved downward as the washer tub is retracted, the lid closing the open top of the washer tub when the washer tub is fully retracted to be accommodated in the main body; and an extension member extending backward from a top rear portion of the washer tub, wherein, when the washer tub is fully extracted from the main body, a rear end of an inner wall of the washer tub is positioned in front of a front end of the main body and a free end of the extension member is placed under the lid.

Brief Description of the Drawings

The above and other objects and features of the present invention will become apparent from the following description of preferred embodiments given in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, in which:

Fig. 1 is a schematic side view of a dishwasher in

accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention with a washer tub thereof extracted from a cabinet;

Fig. 2 provides an exploded perspective view illustrating an inner structure of an inner tub of the washer tub;

Fig. 3 illustrates a rear view of a water feed and drain unit disposed behind the washer tub;

Fig. 4 depicts a side view of the dishwasher with a side panel thereof removed;

Fig. 5 shows a perspective view of a slide rail assembly of the present invention;

Fig. 6 presents a cross sectional view of the slide rail assembly shown in Fig. 5;

Fig. 7 represents a side view of the slide rail assembly shown in Fig. 5 mounted at the dishwasher;

Fig. 8 describes a partial cutaway cross sectional view of the dishwasher showing the slide rail assembly mounted thereat;

Fig. 9 discloses a partial cross sectional view of the dishwasher showing the slide rail assembly installed thereat;

Figs. 10A and 10B offer respective side views for setting forth an operation of the slide rail assembly;

Fig. 11 gives a side view of the washer tub in accordance with the present invention;

Figs. 12A and 12B demonstrate respective partial perspective views of the washer tub showing various extension members provided on the top rear end of the washer tub in accordance with the present invention;

5 Fig. 13 displays a schematic cross sectional view for setting forth an arrangement of a lid of the washer tub;

 Fig. 14 exhibits a partial side view for setting forth a required length of an extension member of the washer tub;

10 Fig. 15 reveals a perspective view of a retractable mechanism installed at the slide rail assembly;

 Fig. 16 explains a side view showing an inner structure of a conventional dishwasher; and

15 Fig. 17 outlines a schematic view for setting forth interference between a washer tub and a lid in the dishwasher shown in Fig. 16.

Detailed Description of Preferred Embodiments

20 Referring to Fig. 1, there is provided a schematic side view of a dishwasher in accordance with the present invention.

 As shown, the dishwasher includes cabinet or main body 31 having an open front and accommodating therein washer tub 32, a top of washer tub 32 being opened. Washer tub 32 is
25 coupled with cabinet 31 in such a manner that it can be movable in a to-and-fro direction by means of a pair of

slide rail assemblies 33(only one shown), so that washer tub 32 can be slidably extracted from and retracted into cabinet 31. Provided in washer tub 32 is inner tub 34 having an open top. Washer tub 32 is allowed to be extracted from cabinet 31 such that when fully extracted, rear top end "A" of inner tub 34 is positioned in front of fore end "B" of cabinet 31. As a result, it becomes easy to load and unload the dishware into and from inner tub 34 and to remove the remnants, e.g., mineral deposits, after a cleaning process.

Washer tub 32 made by, e.g., a resin molding includes tank 79 and door panel 80 provided at a front portion of tank 79. As shown in Fig. 2, inner tub 34 formed in tank 79 has such a tapered configuration that its open area increases gradually when moving upwards, and has at its bottom surface wash nozzle 35, heater 75, filter 76 for removing food remnants. Detachably mounted on inner tub 34 is basket 36 for accommodating therein the dishware. Further, as shown in Figs. 3 and 4, provided behind washer tub 32 are electric pump 37 serving as a drain pump as well as a washing pump for spraying washing fluid via wash nozzle 35 and a water feed and drain unit for feeding and draining water to and from inner tub 34. The water feed and drain unit has water feed hose 38 and drain hose 39 coupled to the inside of inner tub 34. Water feed hose 38 and drain hose 39 are supported by hose holder 46, which is rotatably mounted in cabinet 31 such that it can rotate in harmony

with the forward and backward movement of washer tub 32. This secures a stable connection between hoses 38, 39 and washer tub 32.

As shown in Figs. 5 and 6, each of slide rail assemblies 33 has a triplex rail structure including fixed rail 41, movable rail 42 and middle rail 43 interposed therebetween via ball bearings 47. Fixed rail 41 is provided with engagement member 44. Engagement member 44 has horizontal plane 44a extending from one side of fixed rail 41 and vertical plane 44b extending perpendicularly from horizontal plane 44a, thereby being generally of an L shape in cross section. As shown in Figs. 7, 8 and 9, fixed rails 41 are respectively mounted at two facing inner side surfaces of cabinet 31 and movable rails 42 are respectively installed at two opposite outer side surfaces of washer tub 32.

Cabinet 31 made of, e.g., sheet metal is generally of a front-opened box shape and is provided at both side surfaces thereof with supports 48 and clamps 49 for holding engagement member 44 therebetween as shown in Figs. 7 and 8. Supports 48 and clamps 49, in concert with each other, accommodate engagement member 44 therebetween to temporarily support slide rail assembly 33. As shown in Fig. 8, support 48 and clamp 49 are provided by forming protrusions on the inner side surfaces of cabinet 31 in such a manner that the vertical distance therebetween corresponds to a height of

vertical plane 44b of engagement member 44. In such a structure, slide rail assembly 33 is temporarily held on one inner side surface of cabinet 31 by inserting a top of vertical plane 44b of engagement member 44 into clamps 49 and pushing horizontal plane 44a thereof onto supports 48. Subsequently, thus temporarily installed slide rail assembly 33 is mounted on cabinet 31 by tightening two screws 51 from two through holes formed at cabinet 31 to two tapped holes 50 of engagement member 44 formed at locations corresponding to through holes.

As shown in Fig. 9, tank 79 of washer tub 32 is provided with a pair of coupling portions 45, extending outward from both outer side surfaces thereof for the connection with movable rails 42. As shown in Fig. 11, each of coupling portions 45 has fitting protrusion 52 extending backward from a rear end thereof and inserting protrusion 54 extending downward from a front portion thereof. When washer tub 32 is slidably pushed into cabinet 31 after setting tank 79 on movable rails 42 by putting coupling portions 45 thereon, fitting protrusion 52 is fitted into inverted L-shaped cutoff 53 protruded at a rear section of movable rail 42 and protrusion 54 is inserted into opening 55 provided at a front section thereof (see Fig. 5), enabling washer tub 32 to be firmly installed in position on slide rail assemblies 33. In order to establish a secure coupling of washer tub 32 and slide rail assemblies 33, at least one

screw is tightened from at least one through hole formed at a front portion of coupling portion 45 to at least one tapped hole formed at movable rail 42, as shown in Fig. 8.

Slide rail assemblies 33 have the triplex rail architecture as described above. Therefore, when washer tub 32 is extracted from cabinet 31, movable rails 42 mounted on washer tub 32 smoothly travel on middle rails 43 first, and then middle rails 43 begins to move on fixed rails 41.

A sliding process of slide rail assembly 33 will now be described in detail with reference to Figs. 10A and 10B. Fig. 10A represents a side view of slide rail assembly 33 when washer tub 32 is accommodated in cabinet 31 and Fig. 10B depicts same when washer tub 32 is fully extracted from cabinet 31. When extracting operation of washer tub 32 starts as shown in Fig. 10A, movable rails 42 fixed at washer tub 32 begin to move on middle rails 43 as indicated by a phantom line. Movable rails 42 move by a predetermined distance in such a manner that retainers 90 for maintaining ball bearings 47 inserted between movable rails 42 and middle rails 43 in position(see Fig. 6) are always interposed between movable rails 42 and middle rails 43. Then, middle rails 43 follow the movement of movable rails 42. Additional retainers 90 are provided between middle rails 43 and fixed rails 41 as well, for maintaining ball bearings 47 inserted therebetween in position. By virtue of such arrangement, when washer tub 32 is completely extracted

as shown in Fig. 10B, about a half of a length of middle rail 43 corresponding to a length of retainer 90 remains on fixed rails 41 and the rest thereof extends therefrom. Similarly, about a half of a length of movable rail 42 stays
5 on middle rail 43 and another remaining half thereof extends therefrom. As a result, it is possible to increase the amount of extraction of washer tub 32 from cabinet 31.

Further, since middle rail 43 is disposed between fixed rail 41 and movable rail 42 to increase the sliding
10 distance of slide rail assembly 33, slide rail assembly 33 can support washer tub 32 stably even when washer tub 32 heavily weighs on movable rails 42 extending from fixed rails 41.

With above-mentioned structure, washer tub 32 can be
15 extracted from cabinet 31 till the rear top end "A" of inner tub 34 is positioned in front of the fore end "B" of cabinet 31 as shown in Fig. 1, which in turn exposes the entire opened top of inner tub 34 without blockage. As a result, it can facilitate the process of charging and discharging
20 the dishware into and from washer tub 32 and to remove the remnants after the cleaning process.

On the other hands, with a large amount of extraction of washer tub 32, a gap will be opened between a rear end of washer tub 32 and a front end of cabinet 31, exposing
25 elements such as electric pump 37 disposed at the back of washer tub 32 as shown in Fig. 4. In particular, in case

electric pump 37 is accommodated in a space prepared by recessed portion 74 provided at the back of tank 79 as shown in Fig. 4, a large portion of electric pump 37 is exposed, spoiling the appearance. Further, if child's hand or
5 metallic substances are inserted through the gap to touch electric parts such as electric pump 37, it may cause an accident or a failure of the equipment. In order to solve these problems, the present invention includes a cover system for blocking the gap.

10 As shown in Figs. 4 and 11, bottom cover 56 is attached under coupling portion 45 of each side of washer tub 32 and extends downward therefrom up to a level below the bottom of washer tub 32. Each of the pair of bottom covers 56 has extended portion 56a extending from a rear end
15 thereof as depicted by hatching in Fig. 4. Therefore, a space below the level of slide rail assemblies 33 can be concealed by bottom cover 56 and extended portion 56a.

The present invention further includes a pair of side covers 58 and top extension member 57 in order to block
20 parts provided in space behind washer tub 32. Side covers 58 are attached on both sides of washer tub 32 above coupling portions 45 and extend backward therefrom. Side covers 58 and washer tub 32 can be made by resin molding as a single body. Top extension member 57 of a plate shape
25 extends backward from the top rear end of tank 79, as shown in Figs. 11 and 12A. Top extension member 57 is formed in

such a manner that, when washer tub 32 is fully extracted from cabinet 31, its free end "E" is located under lid 60, as shown in Fig. 14.

Lid 60 is movably installed in cabinet 31 by means of link devices 62 and spring 63. More specifically, each link device 62 has a pair of pivoting ends, first pivoting end coupled to lid 60 via pivot 94 and second pivoting end coupled to cabinet 31 via pivot 93, imparting a translational motion to lid 60 with respect to pivots 93. Spring 63 is provided between cabinet 31 and lid 60 in order to bias lid 60 in a forward upward direction. This allows washer tub 32 to move to a position as indicated by a broken line in Fig. 13 when washer tub 32 is extracted from cabinet 31. While washer tub 32 is retracted into cabinet 31, lid 60 is pushed in a backward direction by pressing protrusion 59 formed at the upper front portion of tank 79 and moves against the biasing force of spring 63 to thereby move in a backward downward direction by means of the link device 62. When washer tub 32 is fully retracted into cabinet 31, i.e., up to a tub accommodation position at which washing operation is carried out, central portion 95 of lid 60 is fitted into the open top of inner tub 34 of washer tub 32, closing tank 79. At this time, inner tub 34 is sealed with packing 78 provided at bottom periphery of lid 60.

In case washer tub 32 is taken out from cabinet 31 and inner tub 34 of washer tub 32 is heavily loaded with dishes,

its rear section and front section tend to be lifted and lowered respectively. For this reason, when washer tub 32 is retracted into cabinet 31, top extension member 57 extending from the rear upper portion of tank 79 may collide with front upper end "C" or front bottom end "D" of lid 60, as shown in Fig. 14, to impede a smooth operation of retracting washer tub 32. Therefore, in accordance with the present invention, top extension member 57 is designed in such a manner that, when washer tub 32 is fully extracted, i.e., up to a position of maximum extraction, its free end "E" is positioned at a location under central portion 95 of lid 60 and behind front bottom end "D" of lid 60. Therefore, while washer tub 32 is retracted into cabinet 31, top extension member 57 can move along a bottom surface of lid 60, guiding washer tub 32 to the tub accommodation position without being hindered by front upper end "C" and/or front bottom end "D" of lid 60.

In case top extension member 57 is only for concealing the portion behind of washer tub 32, top extension member 57 need not extend up to a position located under lid 60. Since, however, it is also required to guide washer tub 32 along the bottom surface of lid 60, it is essential for top extension member 57 to be extended up to the position located under lid 60. If it is only required to guide washer tub 32 along the bottom surface of lid 60, at least one, e.g., two guide projections 57a extending partially

from the rear upper end of washer tub 32 can be provided in lieu of top extension member 57, as shown in Fig. 12B.

If washer tub 32 is not completely retracted into cabinet 31 up to the tub accommodation position, inner tub 34 may be insufficiently sealed with lid 60 to result in water leakage or a latching operation, e.g., by way of using a handle locking washer tub 32 at the tub accommodation position, not be properly operated. For this reason, the present invention further includes retraction mechanism 64 mounted on slide rail assemblies 33, for forcing washer tub 32 up to the tub accommodation position in cabinet 31 as shown in Figs. 5, 6, 10A, 10B and 15.

As shown in Fig. 15, retraction mechanism 64 is provided on one side of fixed rail 41 of slide rail assembly 33. Retraction mechanism 64 has coupling member 65 with a pair of coupling projections 65a, 65b spaced apart from each other, and one side surface of movable rail 42 is provided with engaging member 66 to be coupled with coupling member 65 through its protrusions 66a. When washer tub 32 is retracted into cabinet 31, protrusions 66a of engaging member 66 are inserted between coupling projections 65a and 65b. Engaging member 66 is movably coupled with one end of spring shaft 68, and the other end of spring shaft 68 is provided with spring support 73. Spring support 73 is accommodated in spring case 72 generally having a cylinder shape. Coil spring 70 is provided around spring shaft 68

within spring case 72.

When washer tub 32 begins to be extracted from cabinet 31, movable rail 42 and engaging members 66 fixed thereto travel together to move coupling member 65, which in turn
5 pulls spring shaft 68 in a direction as indicated by an arrow in Fig. 15, compressing coil spring 70. Coupling member 65 is slidably guided along a groove defined by side walls 69 of retraction mechanism 64 and one of side walls 69 is provided with recess 71 for accommodating therein
10 coupling projection 65a. Therefore, when coupling projection 65a coupled with engaging member 66 to be moved by movable rail 42 reaches recess 71, it is inserted into recess 71, releasing the engagement between coupling projection 65a and protrusions 66a of engaging member 66.
15 Since the coupling projection 65a is kept in recess 71, coil spring remains to be compressed by spring support 73.

When washer tub 32 is retracted into cabinet 31, movable rails 42 are moved backward. When engaging member 66 reaches coupling member 65 located in recess 71,
20 protrusion 66a of engaging member 66 is engaged with to press coupling projection 65b staying on side wall 69, which in turn releases coupling projection 65a of coupling member 65 from recess 71. Then, the restoring force of compressed coil spring 70 is exerted on engaging member 66 via spring
25 shaft 68 and coupling member 65. This allows movable rail 42 to retract washer tub 32 up to the tub accommodation

position without recourse to further external force for the retraction thereof.

In the retraction mechanism 64, spring case 72 is of a cylinder shape and spring support 73 supports one end of coil spring 70 and simultaneously acts as a piston as well. For this reason, when compressed coil spring 70 returns, it is possible to obtain air damper effect of compressing air in spring case 72. Accordingly, as washer tub 32 approaches the tub accommodation position, moving speed decreases, thereby smoothly accommodate washer tub 32 therein.

While the invention has been shown and described with respect to the preferred embodiments, it will be understood by those skilled in the art that various changes and modifications may be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention as defined in the following claims.